

THE STATE OF IDAHO  
SUPREME COURT



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**NEWS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release  
October 2, 2008**

## **Idaho Supreme Court Selected to Participate in National Criminal Justice/Mental Health Initiative**

The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center has announced that Idaho's Supreme Court will participate in the Chief Justices' Criminal Justice/Mental Health Leadership Initiative, a national project in its second year designed to assist state supreme court chief justices, together with state leaders, in developing strategic plans to improve responses to people with mental illnesses involved in the justice system.

Chief justices from 13 states submitted applications for the four-state initiative. Idaho will be joined by Wisconsin, New Hampshire, and Delaware. Over the next year, Chief Justice Eismann will convene a statewide task force to examine ways to improve outcomes for people with mental illnesses engaged with the criminal justice system. The task force will receive funding and technical assistance from the [CSG Justice Center](http://justicecenter.csg.org/) (<http://justicecenter.csg.org/>) and [National GAINS Center](http://gainscenter.samhsa.gov/html/) (<http://gainscenter.samhsa.gov/html/>), two nonprofit organizations that coordinate the initiative. The task force will also participate in a CSG Justice Center-convened policy forum with their counterparts from the other three states.

"Chief Justice Eismann has demonstrated his commitment to addressing the needs of people with mental illnesses, and we are pleased to be able to invite Idaho to participate," said Judge Steven Leifman, Special Advisor on Criminal Justice/Mental Health to the Florida Supreme Court and co-chair of the advisory board that reviewed the submissions. "The application process was very competitive, and we are confident that Idaho's task force will design and implement successful strategies."

"The frequency with which people with mental illnesses enter our courts, jails and prisons remains a critical problem; we need to improve treatment options and—when appropriate—help these individuals avoid contact with the criminal justice system. Doing so not only will improve their quality of life but will lead to increased public safety and more efficient use of taxpayer dollars," said Chief Justice Eismann.

According to a 2006 report by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, nearly a quarter of both state prisoners and jail inmates who reported they had a mental health problem had served three or more prior incarcerations. This makes them familiar faces in our nation's courtrooms.

"To address this complex issue, there must be extensive collaboration among a state's systems. The chief justice is often uniquely positioned to convene key leaders to develop bipartisan, coordinated strategies," said Presiding Judge of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals and Justice Center board chair Sharon Keller. "I look forward to seeing what Chief Justice Eismann's task force will accomplish in the coming year."

*The support to the state task forces is made possible through grants from the JEHT Foundation and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. Funding for the planning phases of this project was provided by the U.S. Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Assistance and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.*

*The Council of State Governments Justice Center is a national nonprofit organization that serves policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels from all branches of government. The Justice Center provides practical, nonpartisan advice and consensus-driven strategies, informed by available evidence, to increase public safety and strengthen communities.*

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